

Medical Policy

Policy: 202013

Initial Effective Date: 06/11/2020

SUBJECT: Vertebral Body Tethering

Annual Review Date: 07/12/2024

Last Revised Date: 07/12/2024

Prior approval is required for some or all procedure codes listed in this Corporate Medical Policy.

Definition: Scoliosis is a musculoskeletal disorder that is characterized by abnormal or exaggerated lateral curvature of the spine. Scioliotic curves may consist of a single curve or of 2 curves. Treatment options may include observation, bracing, or surgery. Spinal fusion surgery may be recommended for severe scoliosis but carries its own risks such as arrested growth and limited mobility in the fused region. Vertebral body tethering (VBT) is a less invasive approach that involves placing screws along the spine that are tethered to each other with a flexible plastic cord. Tension is created along the outside of the curve, aiming to slow growth in this area while facilitating growth along the inside of the curve. This approach harnesses the patient's own spinal growth to slowly straighten the curve without need for surgery. This is a new technique and research is limited, particularly regarding long-term outcomes.

Medical Necessity: The Company considers VBT (CPT Codes 0656T, 0657T, 22836, 22837, 22838, 22899[†], relevant ICD-10 procedure codes[†]) for treatment of progressive idiopathic scoliosis to be **medically necessary** and eligible for reimbursement providing that *all* of the following medical criteria are met:

- Patient is a suitable candidate for VBT^{††}; and
- Patient is not skeletally mature; and
- Major Cobb angle of 30 to 65 degrees; and
- Osseous structure is dimensionally adequate to accommodate screw fixation; and
- Bracing has failed or the patient is intolerant to wear.

[†]When *unlisted procedure, spine* (CPT Code 22899) or a relevant ICD-10 procedure code is determined to be VBT.

^{††}A surgeon experienced in VBT **must** have conducted an **in-person examination** and evaluated the patient's suitability for VBT, and the rationale for VBT is documented and available for review. The surgeon conducting the procedure **must** have experience with the technique, and the procedure **must** be undertaken at a facility with appropriate experience and expertise in VBT.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Revision, replacement, or removal of VBT (CPT Code 0790T) is considered **medically necessary** when there are complications associated with the device (for example, tether breakage or overcorrection).

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Medical Policy

- The Company considers VBT (CPT Codes 0656T, 0657T, 0790T, 22836, 22837, 22838, 22899[†], relevant ICD-10 procedure codes[†]) for patients that do not meet the above criteria to be **investigational** and **not** eligible for reimbursement.

Documentation Requirements:

The Company reserves the right to request additional documentation as part of its coverage determination process. The Company may deny reimbursement when it has determined that the services performed were not medically necessary, investigational or experimental, not within the scope of benefits afforded to the member, and/or a pattern of billing or other practice has been found to be either inappropriate or excessive. Additional documentation supporting medical necessity for the services provided must be made available upon request to the Company. Documentation requested may include patient records, test results, and/or credentials of the provider ordering or performing a service. The Company also reserves the right to modify, revise, change, apply, and interpret this policy at its sole discretion, and the exercise of this discretion shall be final and binding.

NOTE: After reviewing the relevant documentation, the Company reserves the right to apply this policy to the service, or procedure, supply, product, or accommodation performed or furnished regardless of how the service, or procedure, supply, product, or accommodation was coded by the Provider.

Approval or clearance by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration alone is not a basis for coverage.

Coverage may differ for Medicare Advantage plan members; please see any applicable national and/or local coverage determinations for details. This information may be available at the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) website.

Medical Policy

Sources of Information:

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Medical Policy

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Applicable Code(s):	
CPT:	0656T, 0657T, 0790T, 22836, 22837, 22838, 22899
HCPCS:	
ICD10 Procedure Codes:	0PH404Z, 0PH434Z, 0PH444Z,0QH004Z, 0QH034Z, 0QH044Z